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KELLY NASH,

OR

“I DIDN'T THINK.”

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE BLUE FLAG, CHEERILY,
CHEERILY, ETC.

“PONDER THE PATH OF THY FEET.”



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KELLY NASH.

CHAPTER I.

A JUNE MORNING.

HAD Jack Frost been at his pranks on a bright June morning? That could hardly be, and yet somebody or something had been imitating the winter-king's work so well, that you rubbed your eyes and thought it must be December instead of June.

Kelly Nash was standing in a long, low room, looking leisurely about him. He had a broom in his hand, but as yet it was as idle a broom as if it were still waving above the rustling corn. The pleasant sunlight was streaming in through an open door. Into every chink and

crevice it peered, as if determined to leave no lurking-place for the conquered darkness.

The floor of the room was as white as if covered with the hoar-frost, and every nail of Kelly's boots had left its print, as he had walked from the door to the place where the broom had been hanging. The bare beams which supported the ceiling had their white coating, and every jagged, rough splinter seemed to have put out its little hand to get a share of the snow-like covering, so generously spread abroad. The slender cobwebs had become white drapery, falling in such heavy festoons, that the flies would have been silly indeed to have been caught in such clumsy traps.

“Round the house, round the house,
And leaves a white glove in every window,”

says the old riddle; and so some mysterious work had been going on in the

night, leaving white tokens everywhere, while all the good people of Kirkwood had been fast asleep.

Kelly Nash did not seem to think there was any riddle for him to unfold, nor did he fancy he was in an enchanted palace, because the very floor shook under him, and the whole building trembled and thrilled like the frame of a steamer when the great engine is at work.

After a complacent glance about him, Kelly opened a small door, and looked for a moment into the great dark room in which a huge wheel was going round and round, plashing and dripping at every turn. Kelly had been in a mill before. He understood the secret of the white dust from the flour, which coated and sprinkled every thing with its signs of plenty to come. Many a time had he gone home at evening with his crisp brown curls powdered, and his very eye-

lashes as white as his grandfather's. Yet nobody ever took Kelly Nash for an old man. There was too merry a twinkle in his blue eye for that. It was plain that all the nonsense of boyhood had not been taken out of him.

Kelly knew very well that it was his business to sweep the floor, and rob the window-seats of their soft covering before any one else should come in. Yet there he stood, leaning again on his broom, and watching two figures that were slowly approaching the mill. Kelly knew every boy and girl in the neighborhood of Kirkwood, at least by sight, and with most of them he had exchanged greetings of war or peace—too frequently the former, for his good reputation in the village. Kelly was very sure he had never seen that slender lad before. His straw hat bound with green was of a fashion new in Kirkwood, and his

clothes of blue check had not their match in school-room or work-shop. The little girl skipping at his side had a trim, tidy look to which Kelly was unaccustomed, and her starched pink sun-bonnet, of the Quaker pattern, set Kelly off into one of his merry laughs, in which nobody could help joining, senseless as they were.

“Who are *you*?” said Kelly, as the children paused and looked in at the door of the mill.

The boy did not condescend to give any other reply than a quiet glance of his dark eye; but the little girl lifted her round, cheerful face and answered, “We are the new cooper. We only came yesterday.”

“The new cooper!” repeated Kelly with a laugh. “Well, I hope you are a good hand at the business.”

“Is this the mill?” asked the little

girl, as though never dreaming that any one could be laughing at her.

“Yes, this is Kirkwood mill; and I’m Kelly Nash, the best fellow in the place. Everybody likes me; and I like myself, to be in the fashion. Wont you walk in, miss, and see what we have to show?”

Kelly did not note the dark look on the face of the tall lad, who lingered at the door as the little girl went in.

“What’s that?” said the visitor, as she surveyed the patent scales near her.

“Oh, that’s our machine for weighing people,” said Kelly. “When any body comes to Kirkwood, we always have them weighed at once, to see how much they gain here. If they grow very fat, they have to pay a town tax, to get the thin folks a Christmas dinner. Step up and be weighed, miss—you did n’t tell me your name.”

The child did not regard the mocking

tone in which she was addressed, and she answered simply, "My name is Annie Ingalls, and that is my brother Truman. Take my bonnet, wont you? I want to be fair."

As she spoke she stepped on the scales, holding out her clean bonnet to Kelly.

If Annie Ingalls had been going to be put up for sale after the weighing, there would doubtless have been many a purchaser. She looked well worth every pound of her weight in gold, as she stood there in her sweet, trustful simplicity, feeling kindly towards all the world, and ready to believe that same world as loving as herself. It was not her fresh, glowing cheeks, or the soft turn of her brown hair that gave the charm to her appearance, but a something which comes not from flesh and blood beauty, but is the light of the soul, shining through the living case wherein it dwells for a season.

Kelly felt inwardly ashamed of himself, as he looked into her clear brown eye; and yet he was too fond of fun to be stopped in a joke by a prick of conscience.

“Just thirty pounds,” said Kelly, pretending to look carefully at the fine numbering on the scales.

“Is that all? thank you,” said Annie, as she stepped down from the platform. The tracks of her small feet on the floor marked the straight line by which she moved to the door, where her brother was still standing. “Wont you be weighed too,” she said, as she looked up into the face of the lad.

There was a flash in his dark eye, and an indignant toss of his head, as he walked quickly up to Kelly, exclaiming,

“You have not told the truth. You have not weighed Annie fairly, and you have been laughing at her all the time

that she thought you were doing her a kindness."

"And who are you?" said Kelly, leaning on his broom, and giving a long low whistle.

Truman laid his hand firmly on Kelly's shoulder, and seemed about to commence a trial of strength that would have ended in no good.

"Truman, dear Truman, please don't," urged Annie. "You know father sent us on an errand; he will want an answer. Kelly, when does Mr. Hilger the miller come into his office? Father wants to see him."

"He'll be here in five minutes," said Kelly, coming to himself, "and a pretty row there'll be if this floor is not as clean as the back of his hand just out of the wash-basin. Time has slipped off, while I've been fooling."

Kelly began to whisk his broom about,

leaving long waving lines, like locks of hoary hair dropped carelessly on the dull brown boards.

“Let me help you,” said Annie cheerfully. “I know mother would not mind my stopping a minute.”

Kelly was right glad of help, and he handed a broom to his little companion, who soon proved herself a valuable assistant. Annie did not speak one word, but she kept at her task till the floor of the great room was as clean as the hearthstone in her mother’s shining kitchen.

“Good-morning, Kelly,” she said pleasantly, and then she lightly skipped away.

Kelly Nash was puzzled by the little stranger. There was something about her that he did not understand. He did not dream that she had been deliberately returning good for evil. He knew little of the law of love, which was the rule of Annie Ingalls’ daily life.

CHAPTER II.

KELLY'S HOME.

THE western sky was glorious with the golden hues of the setting sun. Kelly Nash had no eye for the beauties of nature. He went whistling on his way up the valley, not once noticing how the pine trees seemed to be all on fire, and how every blade of grass was shining like an emerald, as it shimmered in the sunset light. Kelly had a stick in his hand, and he switched off the top of the mullen stalks, without seeing the tender young leaves, the "lambs' ears," that clustered so woolly and soft at their foot. If they had been real bleating lambs, Kelly would have been sure to have seen them, and to have made them scamper away quickly enough, with no very good opinion of the merry-faced boy

who was turning his back on Kirkwood. Kelly Nash did not live in the village. Morning and evening he had a walk along the banks of Kirkwood Run, as pretty a walk as could be found the country round. But, as we have said before, Kelly had no eye for the beauties of nature, nor had he the devout heart which loves the works of the Creator because they have come from the hand of the All-loving and the All-wise. If you had met Kelly returning from the mill, you would have fancied that he was going towards some bright pleasant home, where cheerful faces and a warm greeting awaited him. Kelly's home was a mere hovel, a shelter against wind and storm. Bee, bird, or beaver could boast a more trim and tasteful dwelling-place. A narrow path wound up to the old log hut perched on the hill-side. No little noses were flattened against the panes of

the one small front-window. No little brothers and sisters were looking out for Kelly, ready to jump into his arms.

A slender column of smoke was going up from the chimney of the poor cottage. Was a warm supper being made ready for Kelly? Ah, no. Over the fire of brush-wood an old man was cowering, shivering at the pleasant coolness of the evening, which sent the young blood gladly leaping through Kelly's veins.

"Cold, grandpa?" said Kelly as he opened the door; "well, that's funny; I'm as warm as toast."

"Wait till you get to be my age, and then you'll see," said the old man, holding his thin hands over the blaze.

Certainly it was not for lack of clothing that the speaker was suffering. "Old Nash," as the villagers called Kelly's grandfather, had but one style of dress for winter and summer, in doors and out

of doors. His short thin person was always nearly covered by his long, shabby overcoat, and far down on his forehead was settled a great bell-crowned hat, which evidently had not been made for the wearer. Yet no one ever thought of laughing at "Old Nash." The silver hair which strayed about his temples of course ought to have protected him from such attacks, for it is a sin to mock at the hoary head; but it was not his age alone which secured for "Old Nash" respect in his poverty. There was a kindly and innocent look in the small face of the old man, that won upon a stranger like the countenance of a trusting-child.

"Old Nash" was a privileged character in Kirkwood. He had his poor hut free of rent, and liberty to feed the fire over which he liked to hover, from anybody's woods or wood-pile as pleased him best. The rude baskets he wove

with his trembling fingers but half supplied the means of his scanty support, which was eked out by a slender pittance from the town.

When "Old Nash" first appeared in Kirkwood, he was leading by the hand a light-haired boy who could just toddle at his side. The poor wanderer could not without weeping tell his story of sorrow, how one stroke had left the child an orphan and the old man without an arm to lean upon. He had turned his back on the sad scene of his bereavement, to find a home among kindly strangers. It was a good providence which guided the poor broken-down man to Kirkwood, where he found what he so earnestly sought for himself and his helpless charge.

Yes, all the weary years of his life, a good providence had been around and about "Old Nash;" yet he had not heard

the voice of his heavenly Father, nor remembered Him in all his ways. He had not taught little Kelly to fold his hands in prayer, or to strive to follow the example of that Saviour who was pure and perfect, though clothed in the form of sinful man.

Kelly had had his own way far too much for his good. "Old Nash" had never laid hands on the boy to correct him; and indeed the simple creature soon learned to look up to Kelly as if he were the stronger and the wiser of the two—a view of things of which the merry-hearted lad wholly approved.

Kelly had by nature a sunny temper and an abounding cheerfulness, which seemed to thrive as well in the shade of his hovel-like home as it could in a palace. With youth and health on his side, he cared little for hard fare and hard bed, and when in due time hard work

became his lot, he took to that as pleasantly as to the rest of his fate. He did not expect to find a hot supper awaiting him on his return from the mill, and was not at all surprised to see his grandfather just where he always found him, cowering over the fire. Kelly knew that in the quiet corner cupboard there was a loaf of bread, and he had but to go leaping down the hill and he could get a cup of pure water from the best spring in the county.

Of this simple supper Kelly ate heartily, without one thought of gratitude to Him who giveth the ravens food, and appointeth to all men their daily bread.

There was but a crust to put back in the empty cupboard, but Kelly was not troubled with anxious thoughts for the morrow; so he shut the door and then sat down near his grandfather, for their usual evening talk.

"Well, lad," said the old man, looking into the bright young face beside him.

"Well, grandpa," was the reply, and Kelly's hand was laid on the old man's back with what might have been meant for a love-tap, but would have been more appropriate as medical aid to an alderman in danger of choking.

The two looked each other in the eye for a moment in silence. It was plain that "Old Nash" had something particular to say, but did not know how to begin. Kelly helped him by starting up suddenly, and kicking a bundle that he had just spied in the corner.

"What's this? What's this, grandpa?" said the boy, tossing the bundle about.

"Old Nash" looked on helplessly, and did not try to speak, until Kelly paused and stood for a moment beside him.

"That's my bundle, and there's my stick. It's a strong one. It took me all

the morning to pick it out. I wish you could go with me, Kelly; but you can't—you can't leave the mill. They could n't get on without you."

"Where are you going, grandpa?" interrupted Kelly most unceremoniously.

"I want to see the old place, Kelly. You do n't remember; you were too young. They laid 'em side by side."

Here the old man choked, and could n't go on.

"Now, grandpa, you sha'n't go away at all," said Kelly decidedly. "You a'n't fit to be going about the country alone. That stick will be a first-rate one for me to keep the dogs off with, when I go to farmer Dodkin's with the flour. It will give you something to do to untie the knots in that bundle in the morning."

Kelly laughed as he spoke, and in truth the knots seemed to be put in for much the same purpose as the lock of a

patent-safe is made. Surely, no one could pick them out but the hand that put them in.

Kelly forthwith kicked the bundle under the bed for safe-keeping, and considered the matter settled.

Kelly did most of the talking for the rest of the evening, and it must be owned he had not a very attentive listener. Now and then "Old Nash" mumbled something to himself, but he did not openly say one word to dispute Kelly's decision.

Kelly slept that night the sound sleep of youth and health. He did not hear some one stirring in the room, in the grey dawn. He did not see a sorrowful old face bending over him in the dim twilight. He did not hear his grandfather gently closing the door behind him, and stealing away down the narrow pathway that led to the village.

CHAPTER III.

THE COOPER'S COTTAGE.

IF you want to hear the birds singing in earnest, you must be awake before sunrise some bright summer morning. Then it is not one little fellow whistling and trilling, with two or three of his companions joining in by way of a chorus. That will do very well in the middle of the day, and very sweet it is, to be sure; but never think you have any idea what the birds can do, till you have heard the universal warbling and piping and chirping which they set up as soon as the rosy light begins to flame along the eastern sky. The very air seems full of music, glad music, which stirs your heart, and makes you feel that you too should begin the day with a song of praise to the Giver of all good.

Annie Ingalls had passed her childhood in a narrow street in a large city. The rattling of wheels, the click of the workman's hammer, or the rude brawls of revellers returning from scenes of riot, had often roused her from her slumbers; but such a concert as the Kirkwood birds were having was a charming novelty. Annie was almost wild with delight, and had to stop ever so many times while she was dressing, to see as well as to hear the little singers.

"Is that a turtle up there? I see something sticking its head out of the shell every now and then," said a voice from below.

"Why, Truman, I did not mean you should get down first," exclaimed Annie.

"Down first? I have brought round the cow, and here she is, all ready to be milked," said Truman triumphantly.

Yes, there stood the red cow, looking

inquiringly about her, as if asking into whose hands she had fallen. She certainly ought to have been satisfied with the appearance of the woman who now came out of the small gate in front of the house. She was Truman's mother. That, any body could have seen at a glance; but his sober and almost severe expression was very unlike the cheerful glitter of her black eyes, and the dimpling smiles about her mouth. Tidiness itself she seemed, and the new tin buckets she had in her hand were not more smooth and shining than the closely-brushed bands of her dark hair.

Annie had intended to be present at the milking, from beginning to end; but the minutes out of which the birds had beguiled her were gone, and she knew she could not catch them again, try as hard as she might. True, she was all dressed now, and could have been down

stairs and out of the front door in half a dozen bounds of her nimble feet; but Annie Ingalls did not forget that she had a soul as well as a body, and that it must have its washing and dressing anew every morning. Very humbly she knelt and prayed that that soul might be made pure through the Saviour's blood, clothed in his righteousness, and armed with the whole armor of God. Annie asked for what she really wanted. She asked to be made obedient and gentle and unselfish, a good daughter, a good sister, a faithful, humble child of God. If Kelly Nash had seen her then, kneeling in her quiet room, he might have dimly understood what was that something about her which was to him a riddle hard to read.

It was plain that Mrs. Ingalls had not always lived in town. She well knew how to set the milk all in a foam, as the

white streams flowed free and fast through her skilful fingers.

Annie arrived just in time to see the finishing off of the milking, and to express her hearty delight at her mother's success.

"Is n't it splendid!" she exclaimed. "May I have a drink of it now, just warm from the cow?"

Mrs. Ingalls nodded, and away ran Annie for her precious cup, on which was "THE GOOD GIRL" in staring red letters.

Just as she raised the delicious draught to her lips, a stranger joined the little party at the gate. An odd-looking stranger Annie thought him, and her brown eyes gazed wonderingly into his small face, as he paused and leaned on his stick as if weary.

"Wont you sit down?" said Mrs. Ingalls, handing the old man her milking-stool, with one of her bright smiles.

"I will rest a bit. I've come clear from the other end of the village, and beyond it too, a piece," said "Old Nash" in his simple way.

"You took an early start; may-be you did n't have time for breakfast. Here, Annie, give me your cup. Wont you try some of Mooly's good milk, sir?"

"She's a fine cow, and gives wonderful. Farmer Dodkins has nary better on his farm. Thank ye. A drop of milk would n't be bad. I know Mooly." As "Old Nash" was drinking the milk, sipping it like a child, and looking about him contentedly, Annie exclaimed, "There's father at the door. He's ready for prayers now."

"Yes, all ready, so come in at once," said John Ingalls in his own prompt way.

"The old man, father—he has n't got through his milk. May n't he come in

too? May-be he'd like to sit a little by the kitchen fire. I saw him rubbing his hands as if he was cold when he first came up, though I don't see how any body could be cold on such a morning."

Annie said all this in a whisper, her father putting down his ear to catch the mysterious communication.

"Will you come in a few minutes, and sit by our kitchen fire? We are going to have our prayers now, and we don't mind a wayfaring man's being with us then. It rather helps us, we think." John Ingalls had a straightforward way of speaking, and a manner of stopping suddenly, as if he expected an immediate answer.

"Old Nash" made no answer, but he handed the cup to Annie, and then picking up the stool, moved towards the house.

When the family were all assembled

in the snug kitchen, John Ingalls did not take out a great Bible and lay it before him; he was but a poor scholar, and could but spell out the words slowly when he read for his own edification. Often too he had his family prayers in the dimness of the early morning. He had hit upon a plan which would do as well in the dark as by daylight.

"Now, Truman," said John when they were all seated.

The boy stood up, and repeated, slowly and clearly, that beautiful chapter on charity, 1 Corinthians 13.

"We must try to live by that," said John earnestly, as Truman sat down.

There was a short pause, and then Annie's voice sounded out sweetly in a morning hymn, in which she was soon joined by the whole family.

"We will all kneel down now, while we pray," said John slowly and distinct-

ly. He wished the stranger to be fully prepared for what was about to be done.

“Old Nash” knelt down, bowed upon his knees for the first time perhaps in all his life. He heard God addressed as a trusted Friend, glad to pour out his blessings on his loving children; and as a Father, whom those children longed to obey. For the poor wandering stranger—“the old man who is with us to-day”—there were special petitions. God was asked to “bless his hoary head, guard his footsteps, and help him to walk in the way of life.”

When the Lord's prayer had been repeated by all, and the Amen spoken, “Old Nash” rose with difficulty. Once on his feet, he moved across the room, and took John Ingalls by the hand.

“I wish you had spoken a word for the boy—not him,” said “Old Nash,” as the father's eye involuntarily turned to

Truman—"my Kelly, I mean. May-be you know Kelly Nash."

"Kelly Nash! is he your boy?" said Annie, sidling up to the old man.

"Yes, he's my boy, and I'm leaving him. He said I mustn't go, but he don't know. He was only a child then. I want to see 'em lying side by side once more. Kelly'll get on very well without me, but he ha'n't no mother. If you could only see Kelly, may-be you'd say something for him sometimes in the morning. He ha'n't no ways like yours; but he's a pleasant lad, my Kelly is. I hope I'll see him when I come back."

"Old Nash" took up his bundle and stick, and then bowing, he said, "Good-by, thank you," to each one in the room.

As he stood on the threshold, he turned to say, "You wont forget my boy when you are down on your knees."

"We wont forget him," said Mrs. In-

galls' cheerful voice. "Here, let me help you down these rough steps," she added, suiting the action to the word.

"Old Nash" stood in the street once more. One thin hand grasped the firmly-knotted bundle, while the other held his stout walking-stick. Kirkwood was behind him; before him lay many weary miles, ere he could reach the long-forsaken home of his happier days. A great load seemed to be rolled off the old man's mind. He fancied he had secured a kind of protection for Kelly—a charm which would keep him from all ill. Now, he could go his way, and be sure no evil could happen to the lad.

Poor "Old Nash" in his blindness and ignorance had hit upon a truth. There is no such safeguard for our absent ones as the sincere prayers of God's true children.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW QUARTERS.

WAS Kelly Nash anxious and distressed when he found that grandfather, stick, and bundle had suspiciously disappeared together? You should have heard Kelly's merry shout as he made this discovery, if you had any uneasiness as to what he would think of the matter.

"He's a funny old soul, now," said Kelly to himself, "to steal a march on me that way. He'll be back again soon; before night, very likely; right glad to warm his hands over the fire, though I'm all in a perspiration."

Kelly's breakfast was but a light one, but he was sure that good Mrs. Hilger would send him a nice luncheon; so he gave himself no trouble on that score, but coolly put off his appetite till a more

appropriate occasion. Kelly had a laugh with everybody he met that morning, at the idea of his grandfather's running away; and by the time he got to the mill, he had persuaded himself that the whole affair was the funniest thing in the world. He longed to tell the good joke to Mr. Hilger, and hear what he would have to say about it; but the miller came in with the new cooper, and went directly to his office, where it was plain he was talking on business and could not be interrupted.

The business was over at last. The bits of paper all covered with figures and memoranda were laid aside, and then Mr. Hilger put his feet upon the window-sill and tilted back his chair, as if prepared for more general conversation.

As the fat little miller made this effort to be thoroughly comfortable, he became conscious of a great package in his coat-

pocket which was much in his way. He forthwith drew out a greyish-white napkin, in which Mrs. Hilger had carefully rolled what she called "Kelly's luncheon." That same luncheon was, in fact, as comfortable a dinner for a growing boy as could be served up cold in a napkin.

Through the glass door, Kelly had a full view of what was going on in the office; he was therefore ready at once to respond to Mr. Hilger's call, and receive with a hearty "Thank you," the package which had been such a foe to the good miller's comfort.

Kelly was not a stickler for routine; he was not going to wait for luncheon till luncheon-time, not he. He perched himself on a barrel, and might soon have been seen with a chicken's leg in one hand and a slice of bread in the other, presenting as satisfactory a picture of

contentment as an unsentimental painter would wish to see.

Mr. Hilger was no painter, and yet he had his share of pleasure as he got a peep at Kelly midway in his progress through the contents of the grey napkin. It was a pleasure, however, not unmingled with pain, as he exclaimed, "Just look at Kelly. He must like Mrs. Hilger's cooking. I don't believe the poor fellow has had a mouthful of breakfast. Why, he's ravenous."

"Growing boys are always that way. No matter how much you feed them, they are just as ready for more," said John Ingalls, with a sincerity that showed he either spoke from late observation or personal experience.

"Well, I don't know much about it, but Mrs. Hilger has a notion that Kelly is only half fed at home. She really worries about the boy, and gives me no

peace unless I load up my pockets for him every morning. After all, there is not a healthier-looking boy in Kirkwood than Kelly Nash."

While the miller was speaking, John Ingalls had kept his eye on the lad, and could not help thinking that there was real hunger in the way he devoured every crumb of the abundant provision that had been made for him.

"Kelly Nash!" exclaimed John, catching at the name, "Kelly Nash! what has he to do with a queer-looking little old man, with a hat too big for his head, and a coat too big for his body?"

"Old Nash. You've seen him then already," said the miller smiling. "He's Kelly's grandfather. Everybody knows him about here."

We need not relate the conversation in which the miller and the cooper told each other all they knew about "Old

Nash," and were both much interested in the story they heard. John Ingalls' honest heart warmed towards the orphan-boy, and the miller mentally compared his own cosy home with the dreary, lonely hovel to which Kelly must go at evening.

This conversation was but the wedge, the small beginning of what happened before a week was over.

What a change had taken place in Kelly's life! The miller and Mr. Ingalls had made a bargain for Kelly's special benefit. Three times a day he sat down at Mrs. Ingalls' comfortable table, and at night he slept in a snug little room at the mill. The single button on his jacket had now a half a dozen fellows to keep it company; and break and knot his shoe-strings as often as he would, there was sure to be a strong whole pair in those same shoes in the morning.

In spite of all his new comforts, Kelly's thoughts would sometimes wander to the simple old face that had so often looked so kindly into his own. How was his grandfather faring while such new sunshine had fallen on his own lot? Kelly was not the boy to make himself unhappy by any such questionings. He persuaded himself that there was nothing for him to worry about; and as he became more and more accustomed to his new way of life, he thought less and less of "Old Nash." It was as the poor old man had said: Kelly got on very well without him.

Yet Kelly loved his grandfather better than any one else in the world. The fact was, Kelly did not know how to love truly and heartily. Merry and thoughtless by nature, he had lived on, made happy by the gladness of youth and health, without making one effort

for the comfort of others, or once gratefully remembering the heavenly Father, who had not suffered the orphan-boy to know want or sorrow.

For all the mischief which sprang from his wild pranks, Kelly had ever the excuse, "I did n't think;" "I did n't mean any harm;" which he seemed to consider all-sufficient. Kelly "did n't think" to care for his grandfather's comfort. He did not think that the harmless animals, whose torment gave him sport, could suffer, though they could not plead with him to spare them. Kelly did not think that his life must have an end as well as theirs, and that there was a world beyond where happiness or misery was in store for him. When the church bell rang out on Sunday morning, he did not think whether it was right or wrong for him to be off to the woods for birds'-nests, or go straying through the fields seeking

for wild berries. Kelly had been like a rudderless boat dancing over the rough waves, little caring whither it was bound, or on what rocks it might soon be dashed.

What wonder then that Kelly did not grieve over his grandfather's disappearance, or suffer with anxiety lest the old man should be sick among strangers, and in want. Kelly did not think for himself, but there were others now who were thinking for him. Morning and evening true prayer went up for him from John Ingalls' family altar—true prayer, which was sure of a faithful, if not a speedy answer. These prayers Kelly was careful not to hear. Having once been present at the hour of family worship, solemn thoughts had been forced upon him—thoughts which it had been hard to banish. He would not risk such suggestions again; so he took pains to come in just in time for breakfast, and to be off to the

mill before John Ingalls summoned his family around him at night.

Poor Kelly, it was well that there was an arm of Christian kindness stretched out to him, and the voice of prayer pleading for him at the throne of grace.

CHAPTER V.

ANNIE INGALLS.

MANY weeks had flown by since Kelly had left the hovel on the hill-side for John Ingalls' pleasant home. The wild roses had hung out their pink blossoms, and then scattered them on the sweet-scented breeze. Every evening when Mooly was driven home from pasture, Annie Ingalls might have been seen behind her, not with a long stick in her hand, but laden with nosegays of wild flowers, all very, very beautiful to the city-raised child.

Mrs. Ingalls did not scout at the dandelions and daisies, butter-cups and wild-roses with which Annie filled every old mug and pitcher about the house. She let the child have her innocent pleasure,

and found her none the less cheerful as a worker for this kindly indulgence.

Annie was beginning to feel very much at home in the woods and pastures about Kirkwood. She found out where the blackberries were ripening, and where the vines were the most richly laden, almost as soon as the wild birds, who like her considered them common property.

It was a pleasant Saturday afternoon in July. Annie was standing at her mother's door, her bonnet on, and a basket in her hand. That basket she meant to fill with some choice blackberries that had for some days been ripening in a pasture a mile from Kirkwood.

"Take good care of yourself, and be home before dark," said the mother. "I shall not be anxious about you; I know you will do just as I tell you."

"I promise you, mother, to come home

in season. You see if I don't keep my word," said Annie ; and as she spoke she put up her mouth for a good-by kiss.

Mrs. Ingalls followed with her eyes the little figure as it passed quickly up the street. Those were the eyes of a happy, loving mother ; and as she turned back to her in-door duties, it was with the thought that there was never a sweeter or a better child than Annie Ingalls. On went little Annie through the long village street, her round face all smiles, and her step light as her happy heart within. Past the mill lay her path, and her joy was not dampened when Kelly called to her, " Look out for farmer Dodkin's black bull. He's a terrible fellow to gore, and jumps fences better than I can. If you hear any thing like a bellow, run as fast as you can, or he'll catch you."

Kelly knew very well that Annie's

ears would be saluted all the afternoon by the voices of the cattle pastured in the woods and fields where she was going. He did not think that it was cruel to set her so intensely on the watch, that she would be startled by every innocent sound.

Kelly's mischief failed this time. Annie's thoughts turned to the words of the psalm which she had read in the morning: "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." "I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God. I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever."

These words floated through Annie's mind with their sweet breath of comfort, and she tripped lightly on her way, feeling as safe as if she were encompassed with arms and defended by bow and spear.

Along the path which Kelly had so often trodden went Annie, winding up the valley with the bright stream dancing at her side, a right cheerful companion. Nature, which had been all silent to Kelly's ears, had for her its voice full of eloquent teaching. Every leaf and tree and flower was for her a fresh message of love from her Saviour, "without whom was not any thing made that was made."

Full of happy thoughts, she climbed the narrow path which led over the hill by Kelly's old home.

Dreary and desolate indeed looked the poor hovel. Annie peered in at the window, half expecting to see "Old Nash" cowering in the dimness. There was no sound of life in the silent dwelling, and Annie went on her way, thinking with renewed kindness of Kelly, poor Kelly, who had had such a home for his child-

hood—poor Kelly, who had lost this one friend, the simple, kindly old man who loved him. Many a time through the long afternoon Annie thought of that desolate home and of Kelly. How she hoped and prayed that now that he knew her father and mother, he would be a different, a better boy.

All unconscious of the working of Annie's mind, Kelly toiled on through the heat of the summer day, now rolling barrels, now lifting great sacks of meal, making pleasure out of the very difficulties of his work.

The sun had not set when on her homeward walk Annie Ingalls came in sight of the mill. Her step was slow, for she was weary, and from time to time she changed the full basket from one tired arm to the other.

Kelly was sitting on the door-step of the mill, pushing back his crisp brown

curls from his forehead. He wondered if his grandfather would want a fire on such an evening.

"A full basket, eh, Annie?" said Kelly as the little girl held up her treasures for him to see. Kelly took out a handful of the berries and thrust them into his mouth. "First-rate. Why, they cool a fellow off wonderfully," he said, helping himself again.

Annie had not eaten a berry all the afternoon. The zeal for collecting had been upon her, and she wanted her basket to be "as full as it could hold."

The kindly feeling she had been cherishing for Kelly, however, made her think, "Poor fellow, I am glad he likes my berries," even while she grieved to see him making a place where the inside of the rim of the basket was plainly visible.

"I say, Annie," said Kelly, "I'm just

as tired as I can be. Wont you run up into the upper loft, and bring me down my cap? I left it there the last time I was up."

Annie was tired too; but she was accustomed to think of others before herself; so she started off pleasantly to do as she was asked. She thought of her promise to be at home early; but it would not be dark for an hour yet, and she had certainly time to do a kindness to Kelly. Her mother would wish it, she was sure.

Up the weary stairs toiled the little girl, her basket on her arm; she had not dared to leave that to Kelly's tender mercies.

The cap was not easily found; but she looked about perseveringly for it, and had just taken it gladly in her hand, when she heard the upper stairway door shut suddenly, and then somebody seemed to be working at the latch.

Annie ran down the steps. The door was locked. Somebody had pegged the latch on the other side. She was shut in, shut in on purpose by somebody. Could it be Kelly? He said he was so tired just now; and she had come up all those stairs on purpose to oblige him. It could not be Kelly.

Yes, it was Kelly. She could hear him laughing to himself as he jumped from step to step, his mischief having apparently cured his fatigue.

Kelly had not dreamed of playing a trick on Annie when he sent her upstairs; he was really in earnest in saying that he was for the moment tired. When, however, he chanced to think how nicely he could catch her up there, and keep her as long as he pleased, the idea so tickled him that he started off at once to carry it out.

Annie bore her imprisonment very

patiently for a while; she had found that was the best way to take Kelly's teasing. Patience, however, did not bring the jailer to terms. Annie could hear him going about the mill whistling, as if he had forgotten she was in existence.

The windows to the upper loft were small, and so coated over with flour and cobwebs that they were not good positions for a look-out. The large door, however, through which sacks of grain were drawn up, was wide open. At first Annie was almost afraid to go near it. It seemed so very high—such a dangerous place, where one might so easily fall down and be dashed to pieces. By degrees she became accustomed to looking out from it, and she tried to amuse herself by watching to see if any one passed on the road.

The sun was setting. She could be sure of that, for the brilliant light was

gilding the western windows of the village as if there were an illumination for a victory. What would her mother think if she should not get home before dark? How uneasy she would be.

Just as this thought entered Annie's mind, she saw Mr. Hilger coming along the road in his open buggy. He stopped; now he was beckoning to some one. It must be that Kelly was standing in the door of the mill. Kelly was running out to speak to him. Kelly had put on the old straw hat that hung by the door. He did not need his cap, after all. That was an aggravation.

Mr. Hilger and Kelly had a little talk; then, to Annie's distress, Kelly jumped into the buggy beside him, and away they drove together. She watched the white horse along the dusty road as far as she could see him, and then she sat down on the floor and cried. Yes, cried:

Annie Ingalls was as worried and disheartened as any other little girl would have been under the same circumstances. The twilight began to steal into the corners of the loft, and in the dimness a rat ran swiftly across the floor. It was not the darkness nor an army of rats that were Annie's bugbears. She was tired enough to have lain down on the floor and slept soundly, if she could only have been sure that her mother knew where she was, and would not be worried about her. Kelly was gone, gone on the road to farmer Dodkins', and might not be home at all to supper. He did not come sometimes, when he was very busy. What should she do? Perhaps they would think she was lost in the woods, and all the people in Kirkwood would be hunting for her, while she was crying up there in the upper loft of the mill. Nobody would think of searching for her

there. She could not make any body hear if she tried. At least, Kelly never looked up, though she called after him as loud as she could. She knew Kelly well enough to be sure that if he got interested in something else he would forget all about her.

Her promise to her mother too, she could not break that ; she ought to keep her promise. As this thought entered Annie's mind, her eye fell on the great pulley which hung out above the door near which she was sitting. The rope that went round it was fastened firmly at one end, while most of the rope lay in a great coil on the floor beside her. That must be a very strong rope. She had seen it drawing up sacks of meal so heavy that Kelly could hardly hoist them. She had heard of people's escaping on ropes in case of fire. Sailors climbed the ropes of vessels. What was to pre-

vent her sliding down on that strong rope, and so getting safely home before her mother was much worried. Keeping her promise too, that would be the best of it.

Annie pushed and pushed at the coil of rope, until at last it stood in the doorway. It was half over the edge. One more push, and it went rattling and whirling down like a great snake let loose in the air, while Annie shrank back into the darkness. Little by little the rope ceased tossing and swaying, and hung down still and straight in the quiet evening air. Should she—should she dare? Could she go down safely, if she tried?

Annie had heard of the sailor's motto, "Look aloft." She knew that the real danger was in her growing dizzy and frightened, not in the height from the ground. She might look up, and so be safe; she would try.

Annie felt very solemnly as she took off her little bonnet and laid it beside her basket. Perhaps somebody would find them there, if she did not get safely to the ground, and take them home to her mother. It might be Kelly. She wished she could write him a little note, and beg him to be a good boy. She could pray for him, if she could not write to him. In the dim loft Annie knelt down and asked God to take care of her while she was hanging in the air. She asked him to forgive all her sins for Jesus' sake. She begged him to bless her dear parents and brother, and to have mercy on poor Kelly, and teach him to be a Christian boy.

When Annie rose from her knees she felt quite calm. She gave herself no more time to think. She reached out her hand and laid hold of the rope; a little jump, and she was clinging to the

swaying cable, her feet clasped closely round it. She looked up into the clear sky. A star was shining right overhead. Fixing her eye on it, she began to descend slowly. Star after star seemed to come out in the sky, as she moved inch by inch down her strange pathway. In that far off sky Annie could fancy the angels looking at her, and bidding her be of good courage.

CHAPTER VI.

ANNIE'S SECRET.

ANNIE was right in thinking that Kelly had forgotten her. A ride behind Mr. Hilger's white horse was the boy's especial delight; and as he was swiftly whirled along through the pleasant air, he did not give one thought to the little girl shut up in the lonely garret. Mr. Hilger had a message to leave at farmer Dodkins' great red house, two miles from Kirkwood. He did not care to drive his spirited horse through the farm lane, where pigs and poultry held high jubilee; so on the main road he waited, while Kelly made his way through mud ankle-deep up to the door. All this took time—a long, weary time it had seemed to Annie, but to Kelly it passed swiftly enough.





It was only as Kelly came in sight of the mill, on the return from his ride, that he remembered the poor little prisoner, and began to be impatient to let her out. Mr. Hilger set Kelly down, and then drove off, while the boy walked quickly up the slight slope that led to the mill. What was his astonishment and horror to see little Annie poised in the air, looking steadily upward as she came slowly down the rope. That was a feat upon which even he in his boldest mood would never have ventured.

Kelly held his breath, not daring to speak, until Annie had almost reached the ground. Then he seized her suddenly, and set her firmly on her feet.

"Are you crazy, child?" was his first exclamation. "I expected you to fall every moment, and stood here to catch the pieces." Annie did not speak; her eyes were still looking upward, and a

long-drawn sigh of relief escaped her. The sigh was all that Kelly heard; but there was true thanksgiving in her heart, where only God could see. "Annie, are you crazy?" repeated Kelly.

"No, Kelly, but I am very glad to get down safely. How very far up it looks;" and she shuddered as she saw how high in air the pulley was hanging.

"You little goose, if you had waited a minute longer I should have been here to let you out. What put such a thing into your head as coming down that rope?"

"I was afraid mother would be worried, and then I *promised* her to be at home before dark.. You know I could n't break my promise," said Annie simply.

Kelly looked at her for a moment in silent astonishment. There was something about her that he could not understand.

"I must go home now as soon as I can," exclaimed Annie suddenly. "Oh dear, I left my bonnet and berries up stairs."

"I'll get them for you," said Kelly, starting away up the stairs.

"She did not say one cross word to me. I thought she'd be mad as hops," said Kelly to himself as he hurried along the narrow stairway.

Annie had felt too solemnly the danger she was risking to be angry with any one. In her joy at reaching the ground safely, she for the moment forgot that Kelly was the cause of all her trouble.

"There now, run home as fast as you can," said Kelly, perching her bonnet "hindside before" on her head.

Annie righted her little bonnet, and taking the basket that Kelly placed in her hand, she set off towards home at as rapid a pace as was safe for her berries.

Mrs. Ingalls was at the door watching for Annie when she came in sight, and soon gathered from her the explanation of her strange delay.

"You came down that rope!" exclaimed the mother with horror.

"I did n't want to break my promise. I asked God to take care of me, and then I was not afraid. Do n't look so frightened, mother; you see I am here quite safe," said Annie, astonished at the effect her story had produced.

"You have done very wrong," said the mother soberly. "Never run such a risk again unless your life is in danger. You should have asked God to help you, and then waited quietly to see what he would do for you."

"But I did not want to break my promise, mother, and I knew you would be so worried," pleaded Annie.

Mrs. Ingalls folded Annie to her bo-

som ; she had not the heart to blame her any further.

Truman had been a silent listener to Annie's story. But one feeling filled his soul, burning indignation against Kelly. Straight for the mill he took his path, determined to give Kelly such a whipping as he would remember for many a day. Truman did not stop to think whether he was acting right or wrong ; or to consider that although Kelly was the shorter of the two, he was by far the more sturdily built.

The twilight had been fast fading away, and it was dark when Truman reached the mill. Kelly was standing on the steps, swinging a great key on his finger. Truman sprang at him ; but Kelly jumped quickly aside, and Truman fell with full force against the sharp edge of the stone steps.

He was quite still for a moment ; then

putting his hand to his head, he took it down wet with blood.

“Are you hurt, old fellow?” said Kelly, coming to his assistance. “Why, I did n’t know you. You sprang at me like a wild-cat.”

“I meant to whip you soundly,” said Truman faintly, “but I got the worst of it myself. I’ve got a bad cut here, I am afraid.”

“I’ll bind you up,” said Kelly good-humoredly.

Kelly lapped the wound together, as best he could in the dark; and having bound it up with a handkerchief, the two boys set off towards “home,” as they both now called Mrs. Ingalls’ kindly roof.

On their way they chatted in the most friendly manner about the whole affair. Truman now realized that what he had thought righteous indignation, was real

anger without any righteousness about it. "I don't wonder you were mad," said Kelly naively. "That seems all natural, just as I might have felt myself. But Annie's way beats me. She's a queer child. Why, she never so much as looked sour at me; but walked off just as pleasant as if nothing had happened."

"Kelly," said Truman seriously, "Annie is a real little Christian. She is a heap better than I am, though I am always standing up for what's right. I see when others go wrong, and like very well to tell them of it; but I can't do the way she does, though I try."

"You *try*!" said Kelly, with a low, expressive whistle. "Well, if Annie's a Christian, there's something in it, that's certain. But I should never have found out much by you."

"I want to be better than I am," said

Truman earnestly. "I wish you would try too, Kelly."

Kelly made no answer, and in a few moments the boys were at home.

Kelly staid that evening to John Ingalls' family prayers. Mrs. Ingalls said not a harsh word to him—not a single word of reproof; that had been Annie's earnest request to her mother.

"Stop a moment, Kelly," said John, as Kelly was getting ready to return to the mill. The children had already gone up stairs, and Mrs. Ingalls judiciously disappeared, to leave John and Kelly together.

"I am not going to scold you, my boy," said John very deliberately. "My heart is too full of gratitude to-night. God has spared our darling to us. She might have been killed coming down that terrible rope. Would that we all were as anxious as Annie is to hold to

the truth, and save giving pain to our friends. Kelly, you could not know that she would do any thing so desperate. You *didn't think*, when you were away with Mr. Hilger, what distress you were giving the poor little girl. You *don't think*, Kelly; you *don't think*. That is your difficulty, Kelly. The time will come when you will have to think. When death comes to you and finds you all unprepared, you will wish for but one half-hour of the time you are now wasting. My boy, I want you to think that there is a God who commands you to obey his laws. I want you to think that there is a Saviour for whose sake you may be forgiven, if you truly repent. I want you to think that there is a heaven, to which you may go, if you are one of Christ's children; and there is a hell, to which you will certainly go, unless you think more, and try to mend your

ways. You need not answer me, my boy. Go now ; and before you sleep, I hope you will kneel down and ask God to forgive all your sins, and help you to do better, for Christ's sake."

Kelly was solemnized. For the moment, he really meant to do better. Once out in the fresh air, these thoughts passed quickly away. Yet, when he went into his own little chamber at the mill, he remembered John's words, and fell on his knees. What should he say ? While he asked himself the question, his mind wandered, and he soon dropped asleep, even as he was kneeling at his bedside. An hour afterwards he awaked enough to roll heavily into the bed, where he slept soundly till morning.

CHAPTER VII.

FARMER DODKINS.

FARMER DODKINS was the "grandee" of Kirkwood, the most influential man in the village. In the village, we say; but full two miles from the post-office rose Mr. Dodkins' great red brick house, while far, far into the country stretched the rich meadows and rolling fields of his extensive farm. Those same fields had been wonderfully prospered this year. No blight, nor fly, nor any hidden enemy had marred the beautiful wheat in its progress to perfection. The tender blade, in its livery of green, had been slowly exchanged for the golden harvest, which was now safely gathered into the garner. Now was the time for farmer

Dodkins and Mr. Hilger to have a long talk, before the wheat should find its way to the mill.

The great bay horse was tied in front of the mill one morning. Then everybody knew that farmer Dodkins and the miller were deep in one of their long business-talks, and it would not be at all worth while to think of interrupting them.

Kelly was busy too, in his own way. Paint-pot in one hand and brush in the other, he was marking bags and barrels, before they were scattered away, to give their share of daily bread to hungry people far and near. You must not suppose that Kelly was sending out a specimen of his handwriting. That was none of the best, and his spelling was still less to be relied on, though he had had full four winters at the village school. Kelly had a piece of tin, in which was

cut in large letters, "T. P. Hilger, Kirkwood mill." Side by side stood the full bags, like the sacks of malt in the "House that Jack built." Row after row, flour-barrels were ranged in orderly file. On each one Kelly put the proper brand, and still Mr. Hilger and farmer Dodkins were busily talking. Kelly looked about for something to do. Farmer Dodkins had thrown his capacious linen coat across an empty barrel, saying as he did so, "I suppose there is no harm in our sitting in our shirt-sleeves in the office. I go for comfort."

Mr. Hilger "went for comfort" too, as everybody knew. So the two were sitting together in the same costume, while the broad-backed linen coat lay temptingly before Kelly. He was sure there was room between the great sleeves for the whole of the brand. He laid it on: "Yes, plenty of room." Without a

thought, dab, dab went the brush. The tin plate was lifted, and there was the mark, plain enough to be read forty yards away.

Kelly's work had time to dry before farmer Dodkins came out in a hurry, saying he had staid quite too long, and must be "off in a jiffy." "Here, boy, help me on with my coat. I'm not so supple as I used to be."

Kelly, thus called upon, was right glad to obey, taking care as he did so to keep the lettering well out of sight.

Away rode farmer Dodkins, his good bay falling at once into its usual rapid even walk.

Kelly gave a loud cheer, then leaped over barrels and bags at a bound. The miller was too much accustomed to such outbursts to be surprised or annoyed at them. He was already deep in adding up a column of figures, and did not

even raise his head to see what was the matter.

Mr. Hilger was much in farmer Dodkins' mind as he jogged slowly along. As he entered the main street of the village, he was surprised to hear some school-children who passed him tittering, and shouting, "T. P. Hilger, Kirkwood mill!" "T. P. Hilger, Kirkwood mill," seemed to be in everybody's mouth that forenoon. It was whispered on every side, and loudly hallooed by the rough boys at the corners, who seemed to think the name unspeakably funny.

Farmer Dodkins began to be concerned. He was afraid some harm was brewing for his good friend the miller. Could it be he was going to "fail," after working on so many years prosperously in his business? With this thought in his mind the farmer went home to dinner. He had but dropped a letter in

the post-office, without getting down to speak to any one by the way, so Mrs. Dodkins was the first to get the benefit of his anxious questionings.

She too was full of astonishment and curiosity, and there is no saying how they might have concluded to solve the mystery, if the big man had not got up from the table to help himself to a glass of cider.

Mrs. Dodkins needed no spectacles to read the inscription so plainly lettered on her husband's broad back. No wonder "T. P. Hilger, Kirkwood mill," had been in everybody's mouth.

"Take off your coat, will you?" she said quickly.

Mr. Dodkins took off his coat, and put it on again in a twinkling. There was no more dinner for him that day. He was in too great a rage for any thing but vengeance. The bay horse had to go out

of a walk that time, if never before in his life. All in a foam he was tied at the door of the mill. In rushed farmer Dodkins, his face crimson with indignation. If he had laid hands on Kelly then, he would hardly have left a whole bone in his body. As it was, Kelly was at the cooper's enjoying one of Mrs. Ingalls' apple-dumplings, and giving himself no concern as to his deeds of the morning.

On little Mr. Hilger fell the full benefit of the wrath of the stout farmer. We should be loath to put on paper all the strong language Mr. Dodkins thought fit to use on the occasion. Kelly certainly would not have been flattered if he had heard the angry man's opinion of his character and his probable end.

Mr. Hilger was a kindly, good-natured little fellow, who was never ruffled while he had plenty to eat and to

wear, and good Mrs. Hilger to make all pleasant to him at home. He stood like a frightened sheep in a thunder-storm as his neighbor blazed away, heaping wrath upon wrath in his fiery indignation. The boy deserved to be torn limb from limb, according to his verdict; but his utmost mercy could only suggest that he should be at once discharged from Mr. Hilger's employ, and never again suffered to show his face among the respectable people of Kirkwood. He might go where his old grandfather had gone, and nobody would take the trouble to look after either of them.

There was no help for it. Mr. Hilger saw it must be so. He must give up Kelly, or lose Mr. Dodkins' favor and custom. Kelly, as the person to blame, must of course be sacrificed. That night he was to be discharged, that very night. These were Mr. Dodkins' only terms of

peace, the only balm that could heal his wounded dignity.

A little cooled off by the full expression of his feelings, farmer Dodkins rode away from the mill, leaving Mr. Hilger in a most uncomfortable state of mind. The little man was really attached to Kelly. He had been kind to the boy, and so had learned to love him. To turn him out friendless on the world was a hard task for him, yet he had promised to do it. He must be severe and seem very much displeased, and try to do the thing properly.

Up and down the mill walked Mr. Hilger, striving to work himself up to the proper pitch of indignation; but just at this point the thought of Kelly's pleasant face greeting him in the morning would quite break him down, and he would exclaim, "I can't do it."

Mr. Hilger knew that Kelly had been

wrong, very wrong; and yet the honest miller was inclined to take a part of the blame on himself. He had been amused by Kelly, and had laughed many a time at his pranks, when he should have gravely rebuked them. He had not thought he would attempt any thing so outrageous as this. Two years Kelly had been with Mr. Hilger, but how had he been the better for his influence? So the good man asked himself, as he walked to and fro, What would Mrs. Hilger say to the poor boy's being turned adrift in such a sudden way?

"It must be done," was Mr. Hilger's final conclusion, as he saw Kelly coming whistling towards the mill.

CHAPTER VIII.

KELLY FORCED TO THINK.

KELLY was astounded at the storm which suddenly burst over him. He had felt as much at home at the mill as Mr. Hilger himself; had almost as much considered Kirkwood mill as belonging to him, and he to it. "Old Nash" had said Mr. Hilger could not do without him, and Kelly had honestly believed it.

Mr. Hilger had tried to seem indignant, but it was plain he was sorry for the boy, and was doing an unwelcome duty.

"Never you mind, Mr. Hilger," said Kelly, when the first shock was over. "It isn't your fault, any way. You must n't look down-hearted about it; and

you tell Mrs. Hilger, I sha'n't forget her doughnuts wherever I go."

The boy, even in the midst of his misfortune, could not bear to see a shadow on the face of his friend.

"Shall I start off to-night?" Kelly pleasantly said. He spoke as cheerily as if he knew whither he was going.

"Not to-night, not to-night, Kelly. It's going to rain again; and besides, I want to speak to you in the morning," said Mr. Hilger decidedly. The miller had a dim notion that his wife would have some desirable suggestion to make as to Kelly's future. He would rather talk over the matter with her before he saw the poor fellow turning his back for ever on the mill.

Kelly had brought his supper with him from Mrs. Ingalls', not intending to go there again that night, as Mr. Hilger had told him in the morning that he had

work for him that would keep him busy long after dark.

Strange as it may seem, Kelly ate his supper with his usual appetite, drumming his feet at the same time on the barrel on which he was sitting, and wondering what was to become of him.

Much in the same mood he went to sleep, without a thought of prayer to the God whose word has said, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Kelly was a sound sleeper. The thunder and the autumn rain rolled and rattled in vain around him. He heard nothing until he was roused by a strange rocking and heaving, a shaking of the room where he was as if by an earthquake. Once aroused, he too plainly heard the wrenching and cracking of heavy timbers, and the roaring and dashing without of something more than tor-

rents of rain. He threw up the little window and looked out on the night. He could see nothing in the dense darkness. Even as his face was at the window, a tree brushed against him as if he were swiftly passing it. There was no tree within several rods of the mill. The truth burst upon him. The dam had broken away, and the whole force of the millpond was urging the great wooden mill on, on, down the roaring stream.

It took but a second for these thoughts to rush through Kelly's mind. There was another brush of the branches across his face. He laid hold of the bough, and threw himself into the strong tree, which as yet had resisted the force of the roaring waters. The mill swept past him, and clinging to the swaying bough, he hung over the threatening flood below.

Now Kelly Nash was forced to *think*.

Death, sudden death was closely threatening him. He knew not how firmly rooted was the tree in which he had taken shelter. Another burst of the leaping waters, and he and it might be borne helplessly down the stream. His whole life passed quickly before him, a worthless, wasted life. In his thoughtless folly he had not taken one step towards preparation for the never-ending eternity beyond the grave. The horrors of everlasting punishment were heavy upon him. He could almost fancy he heard the demons rejoicing that he was so soon coming to their abode of misery. An offended God, a slighted Saviour, a heaven lost : on these sad, fearfully sad thoughts Kelly was forced to dwell. Who but the dying sinner can picture such agony as he endured? No hope came to cheer him, no hope for this world or the next. Youth and a merry

temper could not avail him then. He could trifle no longer; he was forced to *think*, when thought was bitter anguish. What would he not have given then for little Annie's simple, trusting spirit! What would he not have given to have been, like her, a child of God! What would not he have given to have been even like Truman, in the midst of many failures, at least *trying* to do right!

To such an hour we must all come. The writer and every reader of this book must stand face to face with death. We may laugh and trifle when we fancy that it is long ere we shall lie down in the grave, but we shall not laugh or trifle *then*. That hour may come soon, sooner than we think. It may come swiftly and suddenly. It may be even now at hand. God grant that it may find us owning Christ as our refuge, and safe in his everlasting arms.

CHAPTER IX.

KIRKWOOD RUN.

KIRKWOOD Run had long had a very doubtful reputation among the villagers. Smooth and peaceful as were its waters in fair weather, even a summer shower would set it to rolling and tossing like a little sea. Down the sides of its narrow valley a sudden storm would send a thousand little streams, leaping along what had yesterday been but dry gullies on the hill-side. The old folks of Kirkwood had a story of a terrible flood in their young days, when the few houses then in the village were swept away, the inhabitants escaping as by a miracle. These good people had learned a lesson; and when they rebuilt their homes, they were careful to keep clear of the uncertain stream,

leaving it room to overflow as it would, while their cottages were safely perched far up the slope that gently rose from its banks.

The mill of course must be by the water-side. There it had stood unharmed for forty years, and yet many an anxious glance had been turned towards it when Kirkwood Run had its spring flood, or was swollen by some sudden deluge of rain.

There were many eyes and ears in Kirkwood that fatal night more wakeful than those of Kelly Nash. The roar and crash which roused him from his slumbers, startled sleepers who were not like him in the midst of the horrible tumult. Lights began to twinkle at various windows, and before long neighbors were meeting in the rain and darkness, all eager to know what mischief had been done. Anxious as they were, they were

forced to wait for the coming of daylight; for in the wind and rain their glimmering, flickering lanterns were little better for guides than fireflies in a forest.

Among the watchers for the dawn none were more impatient than Mr. Hilger. The mill, it is true, was farmer Dodkins' property; but Mr. Hilger had more flour and grain stored in it than he cared to lose. We must do the good man justice, however. He would willingly have heard that every grain of wheat and every pound of flour of his best brand were afloat, if he could but have been sure that the orphan-boy was safe. Kelly's bright young face came before him as it had looked up to him so cheerfully in his misfortune; and Mr. Hilger was surprised to find what a deep hold the boy had taken on his affectionate heart. Mrs. Hilger was by no means a comfort through the dreary hours of

that long stormy night. She scolded her husband right heartily for having talked of dismissing Kelly; for allowing him to sleep at the mill; for not foreseeing the storm; for any thing and every thing that could in any way bear upon the accident. "The fuller the milk-pot, the more sour milk after thunder," says the proverb, and so it seemed to be with Mrs. Hilger. The more kindness and thoughtfulness for others she had in common times, the more fretting and scolding she had in store when any real trouble came up. Mrs. Hilger was a kindly woman of this world. She had never learned to take small trials and great patiently, as from the hand of a merciful heavenly Father. She had none of the spirit which exclaims, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

We gladly turn from the miller's home

to the little circle gathered in John Ingalls' family-room. John was a shrewd, sensible man. He knew well the situation of the mill. His keen ears had detected something more than the roar of the swollen stream in the wrenching, creaking sounds that had reached him. He did not doubt that the mill-dam had given way, and the mill itself had been torn from its foundations by the rushing waters. His eye fell sadly on the two young faces that looked up to his with silent questionings. Annie was the first to speak.

"Oh, Father, do you think Kelly is safe?" she ventured to say.

"He may be, my child. We cannot know until the morning. We can at least pray for him," said John solemnly.

Very earnest was the prayer that went up for the orphan-boy; all felt the fearful peril of his situation. If he were

taken away, they could not dare to hope that he was gathered as a child to his heavenly Father's bosom.

Poor Truman was haunted by bitter self-reproach. Many a time had he reproved Kelly in anger, but when had he gently and tenderly pleaded with him to seek the narrow way? What a miserable lesson had he taught by his halting, uncertain, too often injurious example. Truman knew that he had been his "brother's keeper," and had failed in the awful trust. Ah, how he longed to know that Kelly was safe, and that he might be to him henceforward a faithful Christian friend.

Annie had no thought of self in this time of trial. She had but one absorbing, deep-seated conviction—that Christ was strong to save. He had hushed the waters of stormy Gennesaret. He had put out his hand to the sinking Peter,

and brought the ship of the disciples at once to the "haven whither they went." She knew Him to be full of mercy as well as full of power. In the silence of her own little room she pleaded long and importunately for poor Kelly, and she believed that her prayer was heard.

Even John himself felt comforted and sustained by her sweet look of trustful faith as she said, "Father, I am sure God will save him."

Mrs. Ingalls put her arm round her little girl and drew her to her bosom in the tenderness of a Christian mother's deep affection.

Truman alone looked full of gloom.

With the first streaks of the dawn the hill-side was covered with eager, anxious watchers. Dark objects could be dimly seen tossing on the rolling tide, but it was as yet vain to ask as to the fate of the mill; the road thither was all

overflowed, and not yet could the straining eyes see one trace of its outline. Now the few trees standing in the water came slowly out of the darkness, but the great square building all were longing to see, had vanished from its well-known place. Timbers and struggling cattle were whirled together along the rolling tide, but no human voice mingled with the wild wails of the poor frightened beasts. Where was Kelly? Where was poor Kelly Nash?

"I should n't think you'd sleep well again till your dying day," said Mrs. Hilger to her disconsolate husband.

"I'll give my white horse to any one who will bring me news of the boy, dead or alive," said the miller.

"He's gone, Annie, he's gone, and I shall never get over it," said Truman, as with an eager, searching glance he looked out over the waters.

"I believe he is safe, Truman. God will take care of him. We must find him. Father will know what is best to be done. Father!"

John Ingalls did not often turn a deaf ear to Annie's voice; but now his eye was fixed on a dark object crouched among the boughs of an oak that had once stood by the river-side below the mill. The mill was gone; but firmly rooted, the aged tree towered above the tossing tide.

John Ingalls swept his hand quickly across his moistened eyes. It was not that they were weary with their straining gaze. "Thank God," he murmured; "I believe that's the boy."

"Where, father, where?" was Annie's eager question.

John's steady finger pointed out the spot. There certainly was a human figure crouching among the gnarled branches

that stretched their helpless arms above the misery and destruction below.

“No boat would be safe in that torrent,” said a bystander. “What’s to become of the boy? He’ll get dizzy and drop, now the daylight has come. The night was better for him.”

John Ingalls did not stay to listen to any such prophecies. In another moment he was beside his cooper’s shop, loading up a great wagon with his whole stock of empty barrels, and putting in the heads as carefully as if they were filled with the finest flour. The villagers lent him their aid, sure that he had some plan for good in his thoughtful head.

“Can we save him?” half gasped Truman.

“We will try,” said John in a low, deep voice.

Annie gave a trustful smile as she

said, "I am sure you will succeed, father. I wish Kelly would think to look aloft. That helped me a great deal when I was coming down the rope."

Kelly had not forgotten Annie's soul-deep maxim. Truman had told him her simple story of all she thought and felt while passing along the perilous rope. Sickened with the sight of the dashing waters and the poor drowning beasts, Kelly was trying to look up into the clear morning sky. Loathing himself and his sins, he was trying to look up to the face of God and ask forgiveness for Jesus' sake.

John Ingalls had driven his load of barrels to the very borders of the swollen stream. Now, with the assistance of the eager villagers, he was making a raft after his own fashion. Lashing the barrels together with strong ropes, he made them firm ; then a score or two of

long nails made fast the planks which were laid across them. The raft was ready to be pushed off, and John sprang upon it alone.

"I'll go too," said Mr. Hilger in an eager, flurried way.

"No, that you sha'n't. You've mischief enough on your head without making me a widow," said his wife, laying violent hands on her good man, whom she verily thought half distracted.

Truman was not courageous by nature. He was not a boy to delight in danger, and find fun in hairbreadth escapes. Now he thought of death, of parting with his mother and Annie, of the gurgling waters closing round his head, before he spoke; yet when he did speak, his voice was steady. God helping him, he would risk all.

"May I go, father? I am willing. I want to go," he said earnestly.

John Ingalls sought the face of his wife amid the crowd on the bank. Her eyes were full of tears, but she bowed the assent she could not speak.

"We can pray for them," said Annie, pressing close to her mother's side.

John Ingalls had launched his raft above the spot where the old oak stood, so that it would naturally float past it on its way down stream.

Standing with his feet firmly planted, he held a strong rope with a weight at the end, which he meant to throw round the trunk, that he might stay the raft right under the branches.

There was breathless silence on the shore as the strange craft swept rapidly on its way.

Kelly saw it, and his heart welled over with gratitude to the friends who were so true to him in his hour of danger. The raft struck the tree with a force that

shook it to its topmost bough. Truman fell for a moment, but John stood firm, casting at the right moment his coil round the oak.

"Now, my boy; lend a hand now," shouted John. By their joint efforts they made fast the raft; then for the first time they spoke to Kelly.

"Come down, lad, along the trunk; we'll catch you if you fall," said John cheerily.

Kelly tried in vain to speak or move. His tongue clung to the roof of his mouth. His cramped limbs were no longer under his control. "I'll go up to him," said Truman, who had now lost all thought of self.

The tall trunk was half under the water, so that the distance to climb was not great for an active lad used to such feats. In a few moments Truman's warm hand had seized Kelly's cold fingers, and his





familiar voice said, "Now, come on, Kelly; we can go down together first-rate."

Kelly made a great effort, and was able to suffer himself to be more dragged than guided to the place where the strong branch met the parent tree. There, he could do no more.

"Drop down; I'll catch you," shouted John from below. "Be quick; we can't stand this long. We shall be washed down stream."

John's powerful arms were uplifted. Kelly dropped into them, a heavy load that made the stout cooper stagger and sink to his knees. Truman was by his side in a moment, and stooping down, he sustained poor Kelly while his father loosened the rope that had done them such good service.

Now was the time for friends on shore to ply will and muscle to bring the raft

safe to land. They had run along the shore with one end of a rope which John had left in their hands, while the other end was fast to the raft.

"A long pull and a strong pull, and a pull all together," they tried again and again, yet the tossing raft would not near the shore.

"You can't do it," shouted John. "Hold fast to your end, and we'll come ashore along the rope. Now, Kelly, put your arms right round my neck, and hold on for dear life. Trust in God. Hold on, and all will be well. God will take care of you, Truman. When you see us safe ashore, lay hold and follow us."

John Ingalls was a powerful, athletic man, a practised swimmer, fearless by nature, and above all, fearless through his firm trust in God. He knew he was doing right, and he had no misgiving.

Heaven was for him the better country, whether he entered it from a painful sick-bed, or through the gate of the deep waters.

Kelly had but one thought, to hold on firmly; and he did cling right manfully, even when the cold stream flowed over him as the rope swayed and plunged them both for an instant out of sight.

Who shall tell the deafening cheer that followed the breathless silence of the watchers on shore?

“Give him to me. You shall have my white horse, John,” shouted Mr. Hilger. Not of Kelly, nor of man or horse thought John Ingalls at that moment. His eye was fixed on his only son, just starting on his perilous journey over the waves.

Another strong arm instantly laid hold of the rope, which now struggled and jerked like a living thing. The whole

power of the current was forcing the raft down the stream—now in sight, now for the moment vanishing, as Truman came along the perilous path. More than half of his terrible way was passed, when the rope broke between him and the raft, and he suddenly sank in the deep flood.

Back fell the sturdy men who had been pulling with might and main. No smile followed their sudden overthrow. They sprang to their feet. Truman rose, then sank again. It was plain he had lost his hold of the rope.

John Ingalls waited no longer, but struck out for the spot where his son was drowning before his eyes. Even in that hour of peril his presence of mind did not forsake him. He kept firm hold of the rope, sure that if he once had Truman in his grasp, they could be safely drawn to the shore.

Truman did not feel his father's arm around him as they were pulled swiftly through the cold current. John Ingalls knew that he might be bearing but the lifeless body of his boy, but his heart fainted not. He had striven to do his duty, and he was sure that God would sustain him, though his hand might be laid heavily upon him in a sore chastisement.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOSPITAL.

"I SHALL have to put out a sign, 'Hospital for boys,'" said Mrs. Ingalls playfully.

"I am sure you would have plenty of applications," said Kelly Nash from his white bed; "you have such a way of nursing."

There was no voice from Truman's cot; yet he turned upon his mother a glance more loving than that of the sick soldier who kissed the shadow of Florence Nightingale as it fell on the wall at his side.

"I'm about ready to get up," said Kelly with an inquiring look at his nurse.

"Not to-day," said Mrs. Ingalls decidedly. "The doctor said you were

both to be kept in bed at least twenty-four hours. I am sure that is not hard to bear."

"Indeed it is not; but, Mrs. Ingalls, may we talk now?" said Kelly.

"Talk as much as you please," was Mrs. Ingalls' answer as she left the room.

Notwithstanding this free permission, the boys, after they were alone, were silent for a few moments.

Truman was the first to speak. "Oh, Kelly," he said, "you can't think what a comfort it has been for me to lie here and see you really alive. I don't know what would have become of me if you had died."

"I know too well what would have become of me," said Kelly with a shudder. "I mean to be a different boy, and you must help me, Truman."

"It was just that I had never given you any help which hung so heavy on

my mind," said his companion. "I felt as though I might perhaps have saved you, and I had never tried. I knew I had n't done you a bit of good by my example. Perhaps you do n't even think now there's the right thing in me."

"Oh, Truman, do n't say that," exclaimed Kelly. "I did n't understand you before; but I felt, when I was hanging there over the water, there was a difference between us. You had thought and tried, and I—I—" Kelly covered his face with his hands for a few moments, and then he added, "The right thing not in you, Truman, when you risked your life to save me! I know how you hate danger unless you are angry. It is not natural to you to run risks as some boys do; and yet you went right straight in the face of death for me. You must have felt sure that if you were drowned, God would take care

of you ; and I believe he would. I sha'n't make fun of you any more, Truman, when you do wrong. I mean to try too. But I am such a foolish fellow, I am afraid I shall never be able to think to do what I ought."

John Ingalls came in just as Kelly was speaking, and chanced to overhear the last words.

"There's no kind of person who can't do right if he tries," said John. "You mustn't think, Kelly, that you can't be a good boy because you will never be like Truman, or our Annie, bless her. There are not many like her out of heaven. It is natural to you to be merry as a cricket, and take all things easy. It is well for us that there are some such folks in this sorrowful world. A cheerful disposition is a good gift, and not to be despised when it has God's grace to keep it from going too far. The ques-

tion for you, Kelly, is not, Can I be like this person or that person? Here's the root of the matter: Are you sorry from your soul that you have wasted all the years of your life, and have not striven to keep one command of the God who made you?"

A sob from Kelly was the only reply.

"I know you are sorry, my boy. You have been taught a bitter lesson," said John, going up to the bedside. "But that is not all, blessed be God. Are you willing to be saved by Christ—forgiven all the past for his sake?"

"Oh, Mr. Ingalls," exclaimed Kelly, "willing? so thankful!"

"Now, my boy," continued John, "you've got a plain path before you. You needn't ever expect to be like Truman; you've nothing to do with him or anybody else. You've got, by God's help, to make yourself, Kelly Nash, the

best and most useful boy you can. I'll tell you something for your encouragement. Do you like Mrs. Ingalls? Don't everybody like her? Isn't it enough to make one light-hearted all day to hear her go singing about the house when the day is breaking? Isn't her cheerful spirit the very life of every one of us? Well, that's all nature. She was just like a bird when I first knew her, merry as a lark all the time. But if there was any nonsense going on, any frolicking to be done, she was first and foremost in it, never giving a thought whether she pulled the house down over her head, so she had her fun out. You'd hardly believe it now. Grace has come in and sobered her down, and made her just what she is. Who'd want the dimples smoothed out of her face and the twinkle taken out of her eye? There's nothing wrong in them. She's that sort of a person, and

a better Christian for a wife never a man had. So take heart, Kelly. You be in earnest, trying to do right, and your lively temper will just cheer up those that ought to be cheered, and give sunshine just where it is wanted. There now, I've preached you a real sermon."

Kelly grasped John's hand, and held it a moment between both his own; but he made no other answer to John's faithful words of advice.

To Truman the father gave no counsel. He was sure that the good seed had taken root in the heart of his son. God was sending such storm and sunshine as would best bring it to perfection. He had but to watch and wait, and in due time he should see the precious fruit.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE AND DUTY.

FOR the first time in his life Kelly Nash was learning what it was to love truly and deeply. The risks Mr. Ingalls and Truman had run for his sake, and the unwearied kindness of Mrs. Ingalls and Annie, had awakened in him an affection stronger than he had ever felt before. It is a strange part of our nature, that the habit of loving one person makes us more kindly in our feelings to others. In the warmth and kindness of the Ingalls' home, Kelly was beginning to yearn after his old grandfather, and to remember his years of patient forbearance with the wild and wayward boy, Kelly Nash.

Kelly was going to take his first long walk after the lameness and stiffness which followed his fearful exposure to the chilling night air and the colder waters. Past the old foundation of the mill he slowly took his way, full of gratitude to the kind Providence that had spared his unworthy life. On, up the valley he bent his steps, to see once more the home of his boyhood.

The hut on the hill-side had escaped the destruction that swept all before it in the valley. As Kelly drew near it in the early morning, he fancied he saw a slender line of smoke issuing from the low chimney. It might, it must be a wreath of mist, he reasoned. Yet he quickened his steps, and eagerly thrust open the door.

In the dimness within, there was a figure busying itself about the fire of brushwood kindled on the hearth. Kelly

sprang forward. "Grandpa, dear grandpa," burst from his lips.

"My lad, my little lad," said the old man, dropping down on his low seat and crying like a child. "They told me the mill was gone and you were drowned, but I didn't believe it. I come myself to see. My lad, my little lad, and you are glad to see your grandpa too. You are glad to see your old grandpa," and the tears came again into his eyes as he drew Kelly to his side.

"That I am. I never did half enough for you when you were here before," said Kelly earnestly. "But when did you come?"

"I opened the old door just as the day was breaking. I thought I'd make a fire and have things comfortable, and then look you up. I was sure I should find you;" and the simple old man gazed lovingly at Kelly.

The poor hovel was any thing but comfortable, after Mrs. Ingalls' neat, cheerful home ; but Kelly felt the thoughtful kindness that was making ready for him, and said, "You 've got a fine fire, grandpa. You know how to put the sticks together right well."

"Old Nash" sat down, and resting his hands on his knees, looked for a moment in silence at Kelly ; then he said slowly, "Drowning does folks good, I believe. Tell me all about it, my lad."

Kelly did tell his story, and the old man cried and laughed by turns as he heard of his danger and his deliverance. Of his penitence, his humble trust, and his desire to lead a better life, Kelly did not fail to speak. To this the old man at first made no answer ; but after a few moments he looked up suddenly and said, "Those things a'n't so very plain to me, Kelly. I never was brought up that

way. But you are so quick, my lad, you'll soon have them all right, and then you must teach your grandpa. You see, they laid 'em side by side, them that's gone. I've been sittin' by them a good deal along back, and thinkin' I'd be puttin' my old head under ground one of these days too. There's more that ought to go with that. It comes out of the good book. May-be you'll read about it to me some of these days. You are such a scholar."

"I'm not the scholar I ought to be," said Kelly, remembering his wasted time at school, "but I mean to learn to read better and better; and we'll have some of the good book every day, wont we, grandpa?"

"Just as you say, Kelly," said the old man in his usual dependent way.

"You do n't mean to stay here, grandpa," said Kelly, looking about him.

"Why, you 'd catch cold. See, the glass is about gone from the windows."

"Where else should I stay? Here's home," said "Old Nash" wonderingly. "Why, I could n't sleep in any other place in Kirkwood. You need n't think you must come back to me, Kelly. I'm used to being alone now. If those folks will keep you, do n't leave 'em. They know more about bringing up lads right than I do."

The last sentences were uttered slowly and with evident effort.

"I sha'n't do any such thing. I shall stay with my grandpa, where I belong. What's good enough for him is good enough for me," said Kelly warmly.

"My lad, my own lad," said the old man, the tears coursing down his cheeks. "You'll stay with your grandpa, will you? We'll have all nice here. I can put the glass in, and make things good

as new right off." He bustled round the room as he spoke, as if a little activity were all that was needed to make the hovel a palace. Stopping short before Kelly, he looked into his pleasant face, and said, "It does me good to see the shine in your eyes once more, my lad. It lightens me up to hear you talk. Old folks need young folks to keep them agoin'. You 'll stay with me, my lad, eh?"

"Yes, grandpa, and I 'll work for you too. You sha'n't work for me any more."

"Yes, but I will," interrupted the old man; "and I've been savin' for you ever since I went away. See here. They would make me stay round at the houses, and all I got I put in here. See."

"Old Nash" opened a piece of a handkerchief, in which was tied up a quan-

tity of small silver coins, his earnings as a basket-maker.

“They are for you, Kelly,” he said eagerly; “and I’ll earn more, my little lad. I have n’t been so chirk since they laid ’em side by side.”

“Old Nash” felt the new affection in Kelly’s manner, and something of the sunshine of bygone days seemed returning to gladden his old age.

The Ingalls had been kind to Kelly; they had risked life for him; yet to none of them was he what he was to this lonely old man, the light of life, the apple of the eye. He knew it, he felt it in his inmost heart. That heart warmed more and more to the simple creature who had watched over his childhood, and uttered not one complaint for the lack of that affection by a single ray of which he was so gladdened and cheered.

“Yes, I will stay with my grandpa,

and by God's help I will so walk in the way of life that I may lead him to the heavenly home." This was Kelly's silent resolution, a resolution made deep down in his soul.

CHAPTER XII.

A TRYING INTERVIEW.

FARMER DODKINS was walking up and down the wide piazza in front of his house. His eye wandered over the broad fields he could call his own. He had enough and to spare, and yet it chafed him that the mill was no more standing by the water-side, bringing in its yearly rent in "current coin of the realm." He could not be reconciled to his loss. He felt he had a right to be put out about it.

While the stout farmer was in this mood, he spied a boy coming slowly along the lane leading to his house.

"Kelly Nash, I declare!" he exclaimed; "coming, I dare say, with a pitiful story. Lost all his clothes in the mill.

Out of a place. Not a dollar, not a cent shall he have. The young scamp!"

As the farmer thus soliloquized, he put his hands tight over his pockets, as if afraid they were to be taken by storm, whether he would or no.

There was the very person Kelly wished to see, alone as he wished to find him; yet he moved slowly, as if not impatient for the interview.

"What do you want?" harshly called out Mr. Dodkins, before Kelly had a chance to begin the conversation.

This was not a very auspicious commencement; but Kelly drew a few steps nearer before he said, "I came here to-day, sir, to tell you how heartily sorry I am for the rude way in which I treated you the last time you were at the mill."

"You may well be sorry, you young scamp," said the farmer, growing angry

at the remembrance of the trick played upon him. "If the mill had burned down, I should have known you had a hand in it; but I suppose you couldn't help the flood. They that are born to be hanged will never be drowned. I guess that was what saved you. No great benefit to the world, I'm thinking."

"But I mean to be of some use in the world," said Kelly, his pleasant temper not at all ruffled by the way in which his apology was received. "I don't mean to be the Kelly Nash I have been; so I thought I would come here and ask you to forgive me, and try to start all new."

"What do you want of me? What do you expect me to do for you?" asked the farmer, suspicious that this was some new way of attacking his pockets.

"I want nothing, sir, but to know

that you forgive me for my rudeness to you ; and if you can't forgive me, I must tell you how sorry I am, and try to show you some day that I am getting to be a better boy."

"I don't forgive you, that's certain," said farmer Dodkins. "I'm too much put out about the mill to be pleased with anybody this morning. Think of it. Three stories high, good timber, good machinery, and all gone in a single night! It is enough to put any one out of temper."

The speakers had been so interested in conversation, that they had not perceived the approach of John Ingalls, who now joined the group.

John touched his hat to the farmer, and then said, "It was hard, Mr. Dodkins, and I don't wonder you feel it so ; so much property swept away in a single night, and nobody to lay the blame

on either. But there's another way of looking at it, Mr. Dodkins, that, may-be, you never thought of. I reckon all the timber, and all the machinery, and all the mills in the world are not worth speaking of in comparison with one human soul, that will go on living for ever, either with God or with the devil and his angels. Now this boy was well on the way to ruin, as you know yourself. *He didn't think.* He didn't care what he did, or what end he came to. No good end you thought he was likely to come to, I reckon. Well, sir, God sent that flood. It tore away your mill, but I believe it saved that boy's soul. It set him face to face with death, and made him think, and think to a good purpose. He's going to lead a new life. God helping him, I feel sure he'll come out right. Now, may-be, when we all stand before that great white throne at the

last day, it wont seem much to you that you lost your mill, when that boy's soul goes singing into glory."

John had spoken out the thoughts that had been forced on his mind by the words of the farmer. He had said what he believed and deeply felt.

This was a new view of the case to farmer Dodkins. He looked forth again on his broad fields. He yet had more than he could use or enjoy. John had spoken truly. The loss of the mill had indeed been great gain.

"I forgive you, Kelly. Go and do better," said the farmer. Then turning to John, he began to talk of some cider barrels which the cooper was to make for him, as freely as though the past conversation had made no impression upon him. Yet for long years the vision of that "great white throne," and "the dead, small and great," standing around

it, came up to the rich man in the silence of night, in the midst of his cares, and in the midst of his plenty, reminding him of the worthlessness of all things earthly, compared with the value of one human soul.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

JOHN INGALLS was in his cooper's shop, working away as busily as if he had never had a higher thought than the skilful fashioning of staves and hoops. He was truly as "diligent in business" as "fervent in spirit;" and diligent he meant to make the two lads who were working near him.

Kelly and Truman were learning John's trade, and a capital trade they had pronounced it to be. A pair of eyes had been intently fixed on Kelly as he handled his tools; gentle eyes they were, and full of love.

"Old Nash" had been sitting silent for a whole half hour, looking at Kelly as if

his every movement had for him a charm. At length the old man rose, and going up to Mr. Ingalls, he said, "A good lad, eh? Make a first-rate cooper, eh?"

"First-rate," said John pleasantly, stopping his work; "and a first-rate Christian man too, I hope."

A sound of a horse's hoofs outside the shop interrupted the conversation. A low neigh followed.

"That's Mr. Hilger's white horse," exclaimed Kelly. "I thought the step sounded like his. Now I am sure."

Kelly was right. The white horse was tied at the post in front of the shop, and the miller's short fat figure soon made one of the group within.

"I've a bit of a job for you, John. Though it is not quite in your line, I think you will do it," said Mr. Hilger, taking Ingalls cordially by the hand.

"What is it?" said John. "I'm a

sort of a free man, now I have the boys to do the work of the shop."

"Dodkins," said the miller, "has had all the timber saved that he could make sure belonged to the mill. I was half put out with him, he seemed so eager to pick up every stick. But it don't do to judge people too hard. He stopped in at our house just now, to say that all that timber he wanted to have go to 'Old Nash,' to fix up his house and make it comfortable for the winter; and he thought you were the right man to do it, because you would feel an interest in it."

"That I will," said John heartily.

"Three cheers for farmer Dodkins," shouted Kelly. "Why, grandpa, we'll have a regular snugger for you, as tight as a barrel, and warm as an apple-dumpling."

"Is it really so, John?" said "Old Nash," going up to the cooper's side.

“Really so; and I am glad of it from my soul,” said Mr. Hilger.

“How kindly God cares for us, old neighbor,” said John. “We have better than we deserve at his hands.”

“Better than we deserve,” repeated “Old Nash” thoughtfully. “That’s true, better than we deserve. But we are trying; a’n’t we, Kelly? Mr. Hilger, you can’t think what a good boy Kelly is now. He cares for his old grandpa. He’s a fine little lad. That drowning did him good.”

“By the way, John,” said Mr. Hilger, “it’s about what ‘Old Nash’ calls the ‘drowning’ that I want to talk to you. I meant what I said when I promised you should have my white horse if you saved the boy. Whitey is at the door, yours by good right. I’ve only been waiting to have a new saddle to go with him, before I handed him over.”

"I don't want any pay for what I did," said John promptly. "I'd risk twice the danger to see Kelly alive and what he is. Bless the boy; he and Truman are my two hands, and I don't know which is right and which is left. You've had your own losses, Mr. Hilger. Keep your horse."

"Not a hair of him," exclaimed Mr. Hilger. "Didn't I, Kelly's own master, stand on the shore safe and sound, while you and that boy of yours were near dying for him? I say I ought to have my share in what you did for him, somehow. I haven't lost any thing worth minding, since the boy was saved. It has not done me any harm not to be run down with business all the time. I've had time to think. I tell you, John, I was n't the master I should have been to Kelly. It's not teaching a boy his work, that's the whole thing we've

got to account for. I felt that, when I saw him hanging there just ready to drop into that horrible water. I knew I had n't lifted a finger to lead him in the right way. God have mercy on me. He's in good hands now, John. You'll see to more than his minding his tools. You'll try to make him an honest, Christian man like yourself. Kelly, take that horse and lead him round to the stable. Moolly will have to make room for him. When I see him going through Kirkwood, I hope it will make me remember what I thought that awful day of the flood."

"What a mercy it is, sir, that God sends trouble to make us think before it is too late," said John solemnly.

"Old Nash" took up his stick suddenly, and walked slowly away. As he passed Mrs. Ingalls' door, Annie came running out with a basket on her arm. "Here, mother has put up some dough-

nuts for you. Kelly likes them," she said, as she placed the basket in his hand; "and I want you to take my sixpence and my little red book with texts in it. Kelly will read them to you. You like texts, don't you?"

"Such as what?" said "Old Nash," looking into her bright young face.

"Why, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' I think I like that the best."

"Annie," said the old man almost in a whisper, "Kelly is a smart lad, and knows more than his grandpa; but don't you think I could be a Christian too? God wouldn't mind my being 'Old Nash,' would he?"

"Dear 'Old Nash,'" said Annie fond-

ly, "I believe God loves you now; and I can almost hear the angels singing new songs, because they are so glad to hear you talk so. You know 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.'"

Joy in heaven because "Old Nash" was trying, in his poor simple way, to tread the narrow path. Wonderful it seemed to the tottering old man. Could he have seen Annie Ingalls' beaming face as her eye followed his retreating figure, he would have read in her face joy—a sure evidence of that greater gladness which one penitent prayer awakes in the angels around the throne of God.

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